

RYAN BLOCK
305-307 Sixth Street
Calumet
Houghton County
Michigan

HABS MI-416
MI-416

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RYAN BLOCK

HABS No. MI-416

- Location: 305-307 Sixth Street, Calumet village, Houghton County, Michigan.
- Present Owner: Duane Girard, 111 Calumet Avenue, Calumet, Michigan.
- Present Use: On the first floor are the offices of the Daily Mining Gazette and the Peninsular Gas Company. Apartments are located on the second and third floors.
- Significance: The Ryan Block is representative of the commercial buildings constructed during Calumet's elegant era. Commissioned by Edward J. Ryan, "the merchant prince of the Copper Country and then president of the First National Bank in Calumet, the Ryan Block was designed by a local architect, Charles K. Shand, and built of local Portage Entry sandstone. Throughout its more than seventy-five years of existence, the Ryan Block has housed many kinds of businesses. It, also, has been well maintained and little altered.
- Historian: Wendy Nicholas, July 1975.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1898.
2. Architect: Charles K. Shand of Calumet. Note, also, that in advertisements in the Copper-Country Evening News, Shand is described as an architect, a superintendent, and a warming and ventilating engineer.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The chain of title for the Ryan Block, located on lot 9 of block 21 of the plat of the Village of Red Jacket, now called Calumet, follows. Note that lot 9, as are all other (19) lots in the block, is 58' x 118' overall.

1869, May 18th Liber 13, p. 167 of Deeds
Frances C. Hulbert, by atty

WARRANTY DEED -to-

Edward Ryan
for: \$175.00 (revenue stamp of fifty cents)
lot 9 of block 21

1904, December 15th L 6, p. 56 of Miscellaneous Records
John D. Cuddihy and Auguste Mette, executors of the estate of Edward Ryan, deceased

10 YEAR LEASE

- to -
United States of America, by R.J. Wynne, Postmaster General
for annual rent of \$1000.00

a room in the stone and brick building known as the “Ryan Block,” measuring 24' 1" x 73' on the first floor, along with a room in the basement measuring 23' x 56'. Lessor is to completely fit the building out to serve as a United States Post Office.

1908, December 2nd L 74 p. 491 of Deeds
Edward Ryan Estate, by Augusta Mette and John D. Cuddihy, executors

WARRANTY DEED - to -
Edward Ryan Company
for \$1.00
Lot 9, block 21

1929, December 10th L 116, p. 82 of Deeds
Edward Ryan Company

WARRANTY DEED - to -
John P. Cychosz and wife
for \$1.00
lot 9, block 21

1952, December 3rd L 156, p. 239 of Deeds
John P. Cychosz and wife

WARRANTY DEED - to -
Joseph F. Mullen and Millie, his wife
for \$1.00
lot 9, block 21

1970, January 10th L14, p. 83 of Miscellaneous Records (new series)
Joseph F. Mullen and Millie, his wife

LAND CONTRACT - to -
Duane H. Girard and Bella A., his wife
for \$22,000.00
lot 9, block 21

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: According to the Copper-Country Evening News (9 June 1998), “the contract for E. Ryan’s new block on Sixth Street has been secured by L.E. Chausse.”

5. Original Plans and construction: No plans were found, however, newspapers and interviews with local people indicate that originally the three-story building had two shops on the first floor and four apartments upstairs. It was to be 52' x 75'.

6. Alterations and additions: By 1930, the Ryan Block had acquired its two-story porch at the back facing the alley. Early in the 1930s, shortly after John Cychosz bought the building, extensive remodeling was done. The basement acquired a new floor, and, on the south half, a pit for printing machinery was dug for new tenants. The south shop, which had housed the Royal

Theater for nearly twenty years, had its sloping floors leveled and the exit door to the alley blocked up. The back shed-like extension which housed the stage was removed and replaced with large windows to illuminate the new tenant's workspace on the first floor. Both shops received new glass fronts and doors. Upstairs, three of the four apartments were divided, yielding a total of seven. (At the time, an elderly gentlemen occupied the southeast apartment on the third floor. He did not wish to be disturbed. Consequently, that apartment was never divided). Walls were removed and others constructed. Totally new wiring and plumbing was installed.

Cychosz enlisted the design talents of his friend S. Nagel, engineer for the Calumet & Hecla Mining Company, for the plans. Albert Wickstrom was the chief carpenter. Elmer Taylor of Laurium, Michigan, did the electrical work. Keckonen Hardware held the plumbing contract, and the Keckonens' employee Mr. Mantz supervised the work. The two-story porch, which serves the apartments, was covered with tin pressed to resemble brick. A new stair was added to the central bay and new windows and flooring replaced the original in the porch. A new end chimney superseded the original interior chimneys.

Early in the 1950s Joseph Mullen, the brother of John Cychosz and manager of the Ryan Block, purchased the building. He then put in new glass and aluminum doors in the store front.

Since taking possession in 1970, Duane Girard has done some remodeling of the apartments, paneling some walls with panel board and covering some ceilings with acoustical tiles. After fire destroyed the three buildings north of the Ryan Block in 1972, Girard re-roofed the building and dismantled the interior chimneys. He had the building sand-blasted and the metal bay painted.

B. Historical events and persons associated with the building:

This commercial building with its apartments on the second and third floors has had a variety of businesses operating in the two shops on the first floor. In 1899 when the Ryan Block was ready for occupancy, F.A. Wieder, a harness-maker, and the Douglass Insurance Agency moved their operation into the first floor shops. It was announced that S.M. Schwartz, a representative of the Metropolitan Insurance Company of New York, had arrived to open offices in the new Ryan Block. In 1903 Mary (Millie) Baldwin, wife of the Calumet dentist Alfred Baldwin, ran a millinery shop in the Ryan Block. Beginning in 1904, the north half of the first floor was leased by the U.S. Post Office for ten years. When the lease expired, the Scott Printing Company moved in. Then, in the 1940s, the north shop was leased to the Peninsular Gas Company, which remains today. For nearly twenty years, the tenant in the south shop was the Royal Theater, one of five operating in Calumet at one time. The Royal advertised in the Calumet News from 1912 through 1931. As local population declined and as the Great Depression deepened, the Royal was forced to close. After the Royal quit the premises, the shop was remodeled to suit the needs of a newspaper business. The Daily Mining Gazette moved its operations into the Ryan Block in 1937 and continues there today.

Through all the years and activities in the building, tenants and landlords have respected the structure and maintained it. Today, more than seventy-five years after its completion, the Ryan Block continues to provide some of the most comfortable and attractive housing and shop space in Calumet.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The Ryan Block is representative of commercial architecture of Michigan's Copper Country in the Upper Peninsula. It is not unique or particularly outstanding, but is a building of pleasing design and sound construction. Designed by local architect, Charles K. Shand, the Ryan Block was built of local Portage Entry sandstone, with a metal bay frequently seen in Calumet commercial architecture.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: With a rectangular footprint, measuring approximately 52' x 75' with 20' porch across the rear, the Ryan Block stands three stories tall and is visually characterized by eight bays across the front and seven along the sides.

2. Foundations: Hammer-dressed dark gray poor rock.

3. Walls: The east (front) walls are of #1 grade Portage Entry sandstone, uniformly red in color. At the first-floor level, architect Shand specified the use of alternating courses of rough and smooth dressed blocks. The second story was composed of coursed ashlar with random ashlar masonry at the third-floor level. The changes are subtle, with the combination of smooth and rough blocks most noticeable. At the second- and third-floor levels, there is a shallow, three-sided metal bay encompassing the four central windows of each story. The bay is ornamented, with moldings and rows of recessed rectangular panels delineating various levels of the bay. Fluted pilasters topped by Corinthian capitals frame the windows of the bay. A false pediment with egg and dart molding continuing from the balustrade rests above the bay. A raised foliated scroll motif emanating from a shell decorates the pediment. The words "RYAN 1898 BLOCK" is incorporated into this design. The blind balustrade rests above the east wall panel. It is made of metal with an entablature above the recessed panels. At each end the balustrade steps out, the projections being supported by pairs of smooth sandstone semicircles.

The north and south walls of the building are of the #2 Portage Entry Sandstone, a heavily striated red and white stone which is of lesser quality than the clear red stone on the front. The walls are coursed masonry and the back (west) wall which faces the alley is of sandstone construction but has been covered in most places with sheet metal pressed to resemble brick.

4. Structural system, framing: Load bearing masonry walls with posts and beams to support floor joists on either side of the basement partition and along the south wall.

5. Porches, stoops bulkheads: An eight-bay, two-story enclosed porch is elevated on wooden posts at the back of the building (west facade) to serve the second and third floor apartments. Soot-blackened sheet metal covers the wood frame porch. An enclosed stairway in a projecting central bay gives access to the porch from the alley. A flight of wooden steps and a wood stoop are connected to the back (west) door sill on the north half of the building.

6. Chimneys: One brick chimney in the center of the west facade with the porch addition around it. Six or seven chimneys which originally served the apartments were removed early in the 1970s.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are three doorways in the east (front) facade. In the central bay is a modern aluminum and plate glass door with semi-circular overhead. It gives access to the stairs to second and third floor apartments. The framing is of sandstone, alternating courses of finely dressed stone with more roughly dressed stone. The semi-circular arch is of sandstone voussoirs with an unusually tall keystone. The entrances into the first floor businesses are recessed in the center of each shop front. The doors are glass and aluminum with glass transoms above.

On the west facade, a tall wood door with four nearly square panels in the bottom half and glass in the top provides access to the north shop from the alley. Above the door is an overhead of two rectangular panes with side borders of ten small square panes and top and bottom borders of narrow rectangular panes. Sandstone frames the door, and a brick rowlock arch is above it. Various wood doors open into the basement and porch stair at the west facade of the Ryan Block.

- b. Windows and shutters: On the east front, large plate glass shop windows light the two first floor businesses. Along the top of the windows are panes of translucent glass. A cast iron 'C' or 'T' beam lintel then rests above these panes. Four evenly spaced squares of applied scroll work ornament the lintels. Frames are of sandstone, alternating smooth and rough dressed slabs. The openings at the second- and third-floor levels on the north, south and east facades are all two sash, double hung windows. They have sandstone sills and lintels. The eight windows in the front projecting bay are framed by metal pilasters with Corinthian capitals. The two windows on either side of the bay at the third-floor level have semi-circular arches of sandstone voussoirs. Above the two pairs of windows are dressed sandstone, double-arched moldings, ending in acorn-like balls. The back (west) facade has a variety of windows. On the first floor, each shop is lit by two tall six-over-six double-hung windows with sandstone sills and frames, and brick row-lock arches. The upstairs porch windows are six-over-six double-hung windows either single or in pairs.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The flat roof slopes gently to the west and is covered with composition roofing.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is no cornice per se. On the east (front) facade a blind balustrade rests above the wall panel and the pediment is supported by the recessed metal panels of the bay. All other wall surfaces are simply terminated at the roof line.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: None.

C. Description of interior:

1. Floor plans: The basement is divided down the center as is the first floor, creating storage space and offices for two businesses. The north half of the basement has been further partitioned to create a storage room, workroom, and boiler room. The first floor, divided in half along the east/west axis, is further divided by a glass and frame partition along the north/south axis, in each shop. On the second floor there are four apartments, two on either side of the central hallway reached by the stair in the central bay which leads upward from the street. Three apartments are located on the third floor, the southern one taking that entire side of the building. The porch facing the alley in the back serves as storage space for all apartment tenants and is entered from the central halls on the two upstairs floors or from the enclosed staircase at the back of the building.

2. Stairways: There are four staircases in the building. The principle one is the enclosed case leading to the upstairs apartments from the central bay in the street, east facade. There are two flights, one above the other, which are approached from the east. A multifaceted skylight illuminates the stair. A second staircase, located in the central bay of the porch, connects the upper stories with the alley. The narrow, enclosed stairs wind down and the interior bay walls are covered with board and bead paneling. Access to the basement is obtained by two stairs enclosed in the first floor, east/west wall under the main staircase and hall to the apartments. Each shop has private access to its own stairway in the central wall partition.

3. Flooring: The basement floors are concrete. All other floors in the building are varnished or painted narrow boards.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Basement walls are unfinished stone. The shops have plaster walls with pressed tin ceilings and cornice. First floor baseboards are 8" molded wood, painted. The front stairway has painted board and bead wainscoting with plaster walls above the dado. Painted plaster walls and ceilings prevail elsewhere.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: Most interior doors are wood and have five horizontal panels. Wood frames with narrow recessed panels abut the door jambs. The wood lintel has an entablature-like molding above. There are glass transoms above the apartment doors. A wide, elliptical archway connects the living and dining rooms of the apartments visited.

6. Decorative features and trim: Pressed tin squares cover the ceilings in the first floor shops. In the Daily Mining Gazette (south) side there is a waist-high oak paneled counter with swinging door to the work area. The bracketted overhang of the desk has carved egg and dart trim similar to woodwork found in other buildings in the area. The apartment kitchens have spacious, glass-fronted, floor-to-ceiling cabinets.

7. Hardware: Much of the original hardware remains in the building. Door knobs are especially attractive. Some are bronze with knobs and plates in floral and geometric zig-zag designs. The bronze knob on the low swinging door in the Daily Mining Gazette office has a swag design on the handle and along the edges of the plate. Anthemion leaf motif trims the top and bottom of the plate.

8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: A gas-fired boiler provides heat for the building. Original vertical tube radiators remain, however.
- b. Lighting: The building is electrically lit, primarily by incandescent lights. Some original lighting fixtures remain in the apartments, notably the incised metal chandeliers with milky green and gold shades.
- c. Plumbing: Plumbing exists for all floors, including waterclosets in the basement.

D. Site: The Ryan Block faces east onto Sixth Street in the business district of Calumet. The street is a typically wide mid-western thoroughfare lined with commercial buildings and vacant lots where fires have consumed structures. The Ryan Block is of similar scale as the two-story brick building to its south. Formerly, similar stone and brick buildings existed to the north of the Ryan Block. However, a fire in 1972 destroyed three of those buildings and thus destroyed the former rhythm and continuity of design of the street front. A modern one-story, brick and cinderblock building housing a grocery store and a black top parking lot replaced the burnt structures. A dirt alley runs behind the buildings.

- a. Historic landscape design: None.
- b. Outbuildings: None.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary And Unpublished Sources:

Deeds are in the Houghton County Courthouse in Houghton, Michigan.

Interviews with:

Duane H. Girard, 111 Calumet Avenue, Calumet, Michigan. present owner of the Ryan Block	8 July 1975
Mr. and Mrs. Irving Goulette, 305 6th Street, Calumet, Michigan thirty-four year tenants of the second floor, southeast apartment.	9 July 1975
Ms. Bertha Jacka, 510 Portland Street, Calumet, Michigan. life-time resident of Calumet.	21 July 1975
Joseph F. Mullen, 429 5th Street, Calumet, Michigan. former owner of the Ryan Block, responsible for much of the alteration work done in the building.	21 July 1975
Rudolph J. Murn, 307 6th Street, Calumet, Michigan. manager of the Peninsular Gas Company.	9 July 1975
Mrs. James M. O'Neil, 508 7th Street., Calumet, Michigan	8 July 1975

employee of the Peninsular Gas Company and lifetime resident of Calumet and Laurium.

Elmer Terrian, 207 Tamarack Street, Laurium, [Michigan?]. 8 July 1975
manager of the Calumet office of the Daily Mining Gazette.

Published Sources:

Calumet News, 9 April 1912, 8 April 1914, 15 September 1931, and 3 March 1932.

Copper Country Evening News, (Calumet, MI), 9 June 1898, 5 May 1898, 16 February 1899,
16 August 1899, 18 September 1899.

Eckert, Kathryn B. National Register Nomination Form for Calumet Downtown Historic District,
prepared 22 October 1973, Michigan History Division, Lansing, MI.

Polk's Houghton County Directory. Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co., Publishers, Vol. 3 (1899-1900),
Vol. 5 (1903-1904), Vol. 7 (1907-1908), Vol. 8 (1916-1917).

Turner, Arthur. Calumet Copper and People. Hancock, MI: The Book Concern Printers, 1974.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Documentation was done in the summer of 1975 by Kevin Harrington and Wendy Nicholas for the
Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), a division
of the National Park Service.

Fig. 1 Perspective view of the front elevation. Photo by author, 1975.

